

# Best Management Practices

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



## Black-tailed jackrabbit

*Lepus californicus*

Common name • Black-tailed jackrabbit

Scientific name • *Lepus californicus*

State status • Endangered

### Ecology

Black-tailed jackrabbits reside in the open plains of North America. In Missouri, they occupy pastures, hay fields and cultivated areas, especially before crops grow more than 2 feet tall. Jackrabbits breed year-round, although most breeding occurs from late winter to mid-summer. Pregnancy lasts 41-47 days, at which time two-four young are born. Females may have as many as four litters per year. Young become independent when they are 3-4 weeks old. Jackrabbits eat only vegetation. During summer, they prefer herbaceous plants and grasses; the winter diet consists of dried grasses, buds, twigs, roots and bark.

### Reasons for Decline

It is likely that black-tailed jackrabbits are suffering from the loss of native tallgrass prairies in Missouri. The trend toward extensive cultivation has caused a decrease in black-tailed jackrabbit habitat that is reflected in their declining populations. In addition, humans have historically decimated their populations by poisoning, shooting and trapping rabbits when they are observed near cropland.

### Specific Recommendations

Black-tailed jackrabbits need large expanses of grassland with open vistas.

→ Avoid destroying native grassland habitat.

Replant native warm-season grasses and forbs following ground-disturbing activities.

→ Avoid the use of non-native plants such as tall fescue.

→ When damage to crops is extensive, build rabbit fences that are made of woven wire or poultry netting, with the bottom turned out and buried at least 6 inches deep and 3 feet high.

→ Loosely wrap young orchard trees with trunk protectors made of plastic, cardboard, paper, aluminum or poultry netting.

→ Removal of woody vegetation in grassland habitats would benefit jackrabbits by opening up vistas.

### Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development near prairies, contact:

Missouri Department of Conservation  
Policy Coordination Section  
P.O. Box 180  
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Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180  
Telephone: 573/751-4115

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Environmental Quality  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176  
Telephone: 573/526-3315

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Regulatory Branch  
700 Federal Building  
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896  
Telephone: 816/983-3990

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Water, Wetlands, and Pesticides Division  
901 North 5th Street  
Kansas City, KS 66101  
Telephone: 913/551-7307

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Ecological Services Field Office  
608 E. Cherry Street, Room 200  
Columbia, MO 65201  
Telephone: 573/876-1911

### Disclaimer

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